



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
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### **Increasing Diabetes Rates Among North Dakota Children Highlight Importance of Healthy Lifestyles**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The number of North Dakota children who have type 2 diabetes is increasing, highlighting the importance of healthy diets and active lifestyles, according to Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota and the North Dakota Department of Health.

In recent years, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota has seen a significant increase in the prevalence of diabetes in members age 18 and younger, from 2.8 per 1,000 children in 2003 to 4.5 per 1,000 children in 2007. Of considerable concern, 31 percent of the children with diabetes have type 2 diabetes, a condition historically considered by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to be rare among children. Type 2 diabetes generally has been more common in adults who are overweight or obese and who have poor levels of activity.

“The increased prevalence of type 2 diabetes among North Dakota children may be associated with the increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity,” said Dr. David Hanekom, Blue Cross Blue Shield medical director. “The decreasing activity levels currently recorded among children is another factor contributing to the increase of type 2 diabetes.”

“These trends suggest urgent action is needed to prevent or reduce the long-term complications associated with being overweight or obese,” said Sherri Paxson, director of the Division of Chronic Disease for the North Dakota Department of Health. “It’s important that we help our children eat healthy foods and become more physically active. These and other strategies can help our children to grow up healthy without health problems like diabetes that can come with being overweight and obese.”

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The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES II, III & IV) reports that in children ages 6 through 11, the prevalence of overweight has increased from 6.5 percent (1976-1980) to 17.5 percent (2001-2004). Among children ages 12 through 19, prevalence increased from 5.0 percent to 17.0 percent during the same time period.

For more information, contact Sherri Paxon, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2698 or Dr. David Hanekom, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota, at 701.282.1878. Charts illustrating the increasing prevalence of diabetes and being overweight are available at [www.diabetesnd.org/children.html](http://www.diabetesnd.org/children.html).

-- 30 --

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